TALES FROM THE CRYPT

HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

THE HAUNT OF FEAR®

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

NO. 26
AUGUST

LNK 10

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

10¢

FEATURING...

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

ARE YOU A RED DUPE?

- HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN *STILL* PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SLICKS, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T *HAVE* TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST. NOT *YET*...
- BUT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD *LIKE* TO CENSOR... WHO WOULD *LIKE* TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR *THEM!* THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR *YOU!*
- THESE PEOPLE SAY THAT *COMIC BOOKS* AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS *NO* COMIC BOOKS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NO-GOODS. SOME ARE DO-GOODERS. SOME ARE WELL-MEANING. AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN.
- BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING OF NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY:

THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

- WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! *HERE! READ THIS:*

THE [COMMUNIST] "DAILY WORKER" OF JULY 13, 1953 BITTERLY ATTACKED THE ROLE OF:

"...SO-CALLED 'COMICS' IN BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BETTER TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROCITIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

THIS ARTICLE ALSO QUOTED ***GERSHON LEGMAN*** *(WHO CLAIMS TO BE A GHOST WRITER FOR* ***DR. FREDERICK WERTHAM****, THE AUTHOR OF A RECENT SMEAR AGAINST COMICS PUBLISHED IN* ***"THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL"****). THIS SAME* ***G. LEGMAN****, IN ISSUE # 3 OF* ***"NEUROTICA,"*** *PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 1948, WILDLY CONDEMNED COMICS, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING THAT:*

"THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER... MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION... FANTASY VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRATIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS... THIS WILL SIPHON OFF HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND *PREVENT REVOLUTION.*"

- SO THE *NEXT* TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T.A. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE "NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS" AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE *ONCE-OVER*. WE'RE NOT SAYING HE *IS* A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THE WHOLE THING! HE MAY BE A *DUPE!* HE MAY NOT EVEN *READ* THE "DAILY WORKER"! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S *SWALLOWED* THE *RED BAIT... HOOK, LINE,* AND *SINKER!*

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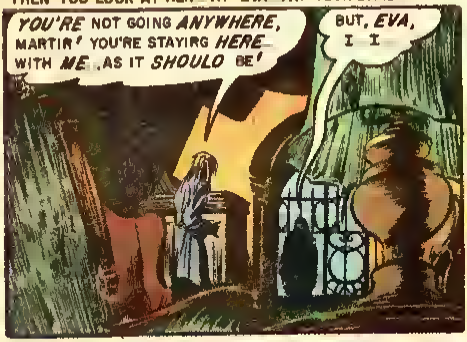
Ontology

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

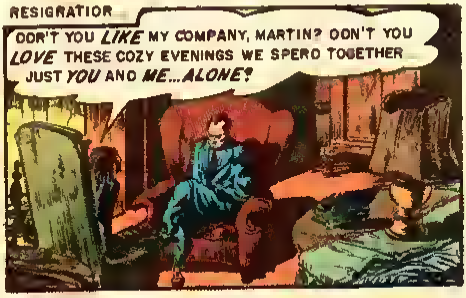
HEE, HEE! WELCOME TO *THE HAUNT OF FEAR*, FIENDS. *ENTER* FOR THE *ENTREE*, SERVED UP BY YOUR *CACKLING CREEPS COOK, THE OLD WITCH*. THE *FIRE* UNDER MY *PEW POT* IS *LIT*... (I POURED A LITTLE *ALCOHOL* ON IT)... AND I HOPE YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN MASTICATING ANOTHER *MORSEL* OF MY *MORBID MENU. THIS REVOLTING REPAST* IS A *FAVORITE FOUL FARE* OF MINE... A *MURDEROUS MEAL* TOPPED OFF WITH A *DERANGED DESSERT*. I *CALL* THIS *SLIME-STORY SLOP SERVING*:

MARRIAGE VOW

YOU LOOK AROUND . AT THE DUST-LADEN TABLES THE COB-WEBBED LAMPS THE MILDEWED FURRITURE AND THEN YOU LOOK AT HER AT EVA . AT YOUR DARLING WIFE.



AND SO, LIKE THE PROVERBIAL HEN-PECKED HUSBAND, YOU OBEY MEEKLY . TAKING OFF YOUR COAT ONCE MORE HANGING IT BACK UP IR THE CLOSET AND COMING IRYO THE FOUL-SMELLING MUSTY LIVING ROOM, TO SIT ONCE AGAIN THROUGH ARDTHER EVENING OF HORROR IN STORE SILENT RESIGRATIOR



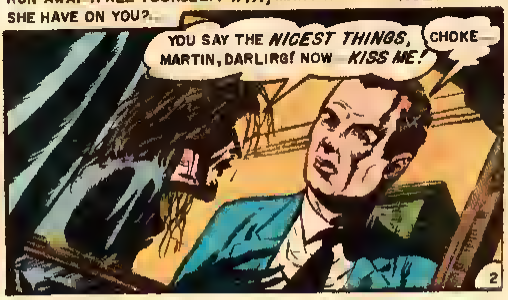
YOU SIT STIFFLY, IN QUIET REVULSION, TRYIRD TO IGNORE HER MOCKERY, BUT YOU JUMP LIKE A FRIGHTENED RABBIT AS SHE SCREAMS

HOW YOU LIE, MARTIR! YOU KROW YOU'RE FIGHTIRG OFF THE NAUSEA THAT SWEEPS OVER YOU FROM THE CONTEMPT ARD LOATHING YOU HAVE FOR THIS WOMAR YOU MARRIED ONLY A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO. SHE REVER ATTEMPTS TO 'PRETTY UP' FOR YOU. SHE ALWAYS LOOKS HER WORST FOR YOU HER VERY WORST

CAN YOU SAY IT, MARTIR? CAN YOU BRING YOURSELF YO MURMUR THOSE SWEET WORDS TO THIS DISGUSTIRD CREATURE WHOSE VERY APPEARANCE WOULD MAKE ANY RORMAL MAN BE SICK OR THE FLOOR? CAR YOU, MARTIR? OF COURSE YOU CAR! YOD MUST!

YOU HAVE TO VOMIT IT OUT, DON'T YOU, MARTIR? ARD YOU KROW WHAT'S COMIRG RERT, TOO. IT'S THE RITUAL. IT HAPPENS EVERY NIGHT. SHE RUBS YOUR NOSE IN IT AND YOU SPIRELESSLY TAKE IT

YOU'RE A PITIFUL FIGURE, MARTIR SAURDERS. RO DECENT, SELF-RESPECTING HUMAN BEING WOULD LIVE WITH THIS CREATURE FOR ONE INSTANT. YET YOU SWALLOW YOUR PRIDE AND STAY DAY AFTER DAY. YOU MAKE RO ATTEMPT TO LEAVE HER RUN AWAY . FREE YOURSELF. WHY, MARTIR? WHAT HOLD DOES SHE HAVE ON YOU?



DOES SHE HAVE MONEY, MARTIN? DOES THAT EXPLAIR IT? A MAN WILL PUT UP WITH A LOT TO ENJOY GOLDEN LUXURIES. WOULD IT BE WORTH A MILLION DOLLARS TO YOU TO KISS THOSE PUFFED LIPS WITH NO TRACE OF LIPSTICK TO HIDE THEIR SICKENING GREY SLOTCHINESS? *TWO* MILLIDN?

I'M *WAITING*, MARTIN!

Y-YES, DEAR! GAGGG...

NO, MARTIN! IT ISN'T MONEY! YOU KNOW THAT YOU'D DITCH THE MILLIONS TORIGHT...THIS MINUTE... AND CRAWL A THOUSAND MILES ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES OVER BROKEN GLASS IF YOU COULD GET AWAY FROM HER. BUT YOU CAN'T...

MMMM! THAT'S *NICE*, DEAR!

ND ESCAPE! TRAPPED! TILL DEATH DO US PART...

YES, MARTIR. THOSE WORDS ENSNARE YOU LIKE A STEEL VISE. YOU'RE PORCED TO SWALLOW EVERY BITTER DROP OF THIS DOMESTIC SWILL AND LIVE ON IR A KIND OF PURGATORY WITH THIS FILTHY FEMALE WHO IS YOUR WEDDED WIFE...

IF *ONLY* ALL THIS HADN'T *NAPPENED!* IF *ONLY* SHE WERE *STILL THE SAME LOVELY GIRL I FIRST MET* AND...

THERE'S ONE ESCAPE, ISR'T THERE, MARTIN? YOU CAN ESCAPE INTO THE MEMORIES OF YOUR PAST, CAN'T YOU? YOU CAN RELIVE THOSE MOMENTS WHEN YOU FIRST KNEW THE RIPERESS OF EVA...

YOU'RE SO *YOUNG* AND *FRESH*, EVA! FRESH AS *DEW-LADEN FLOWERS* TREMBLING IN THE MORNING SUN!

YOU'RE SWEET, MARTIN!

YES, MARTIN. REMEMBER ENCHANTING YOUNG EVA SEVEN YEARS AGD...ENCHANTING FOR BOTH HER BEAUTY AND HER WEALTH. SHE FELL FOR YOUR SMOOTH LINES, DIDN'T SHE? SHE FELL FOR YOUR HUSKY MURMURS OF LOVE...YOUR PRACTICED CHARM...

OH, DARLING, I *DO* LOVE YOU! I LOVE YOU MORE THAN *ANYTNING ON THIS EARTH!*

AND I LOVE YOU MORE THAN *LIFE*, EVA... MORE THAN *LIFE ITSELF*!

REMEMSER THE WEDDING, MARTIR... AND ALL OF EVA'S RICH FRIENDS? REMEMBER THE MINISTER'S WORDS...

DO *YOU*, MARTIN SAUNDERS, *TAKE THIS WOMAN*...?

THIS *WOMAN* AND HER *MONEY*

I DO!

IT WAS YOUR DREAM COME TRUE, WASN'T IT, MARTIN? ALL OF YOUR WILDEST HOPES AND SCHEMES HAD PANRED OUT. AFTER THE HONEYMOON, YOU SET UP HOUSEKEEPIRG IN EVA'S TOWN HOUSE, OFF CERTRAL PARK. AND YOU HAD SUCH PERPLEXING PROBLEMS...

MORNIN', MR SAUNDERS!

GOING FOR A *RIDE*, GEORGE! LET'S SEE... THE *JAGUAR*...OR THE *CADDY*? CAN'T DECIDE!

AND EVA HERSELF WASN'T SO HARD TO TAKE BACK THEN IN THE BEGINNING, WAS SHE MARTIN? SHE WAS WARM AND LOVELY ... ALL WOMAN...AND EAGER TO PROVE IT TO YOU...OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
YOU LOOK TIRED, DARLING! COME TO BED!
EVA . YOU ENTRANCING WITCH

YES, MARTIN! THAT WAS EVA THEN! BUT NOW? LISTEN TO HER...RUDELY BURSTING YOUR DREAM-BUBBLE OF THE PASSIONATE PAST...
I SAID 'YOUR SUPPER'S READY!' COME AND EAT IT! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
N-NOTHING, EVA! NOTHING

SUPPER, MARTIN SHE CALLS THE ABOMINABLE STEW OF STALE, HALF-ROTTED MEATS SHE SERVES YOU SUPPER. WHY IT'S FOOD A PIG WOULD TURN AWAY FROM, NAUSEATED...
MMMMPH! ARE YOU CRITICIZING MY COOKING?

YOU SHAKE YOUR HEAD, FIGHTING DOWN THE GORGE THAT RISES IN YOUR THROAT. AND YOU SIT DOWN TO EAT.
FINISH EVERY DROP, DEAR! WE MUST KEEP YOU STRONG AND HEALTHY! AND DON'T SCRAPE THE MOLD FROM THE BREAD! TRY IT! IT GIVES IT TASTE..
Y-YES, EVA..

SHE DOESN'T EAT WITH YOU, DOES SHE, MARTIN? SHE JUST SITS THERE.. OPPOSITE YOU...WATCHING...WATCHING...
I...I'M NOT HUNGRY ANYMORE, EVA!
WHY YOU'VE SCARCELY EATEN ENOUGH TO STAY ALIVE, MARTIN! C'MON! FINISH UP!

SO YOU GO ON, MARTIN SAUNDERS... LIVING IN A HOUSE PERMEATED WITH THE FOUL FETID ODOR OF ROT AND DECAY. DANK AND DAMP AND UNCLEANED FOR SO LONG..
THAT SMELL...GAGG...THAT AWFUL STENCH!

YOU GO ON LIVING IN A HOUSE THAT EVEN A "TOBACCO ROAD FAMILY" WOULD SPURN IN DISGUST...WATCHING THE RATS SCAMPER ACROSS THE LITTER-STREWN FLOORS OF THIS ONCE LUXURIOUS MANSION...
UGGGNN

AND YOUR FRIENDS, MARTIN. EVA'S FRIENDS. THEY'VE ALL CEASED TO CALL, HAVEN'T THEY? EVA MADE SURE OF THAT. SHE'S CUT YOU OFF WITH ALL SOCIAL INTERCOURSE WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. YOUR ONCE-STATELY BROWNSTONE HOUSE IS THE ABODE OF TWO VIRTUAL HERMITS, NOW... A CAVE IN THE HEART OF THE BIG CITY..

I'VE GOT TO GET *OUT* OF HERE, EVA...JUST FOR A *LITTLE* WHILE! IF I *DON'T*, I'LL...I'LL...

YOU WON'T *DIE* IF YOU *DON'T!* YOU WON'T *DIE!* AND *THAT'S* ALL WE *WORRY* ABOUT, *ISN'T* IT, MARTIN?

AND YET YOU DON'T LEAVE HER, MARTIN. WHY? WHY? IN THE MIRROR, YOU'RE STILL YOUNG, HANDSOME, MAGNETIC. YOU COULD EASILY FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER WOMAN.. MARRY AGAIN... LIVE HAPPILY. AND YET YOU DON'T LEAVE HER. WHY?..

TILL DEATH DO US PART..

WHY DO THOSE WORDS CHAIN YOU, MARTIN? AREN'T THEY YOUR ANSWER? DON'T YOU SEE? THEY COULD FREE YOU. DEATH! WHY DON'T YOU KILL HER, MARTIN?..

KILL HER? IF I ONLY *COULD!* BUT I *CAN'T!* I *CAN'T!*

ARE YOU A COWARD, MARTIN? ARE YOU AFRAID TO TRY? NO, THAT ISN'T IT. THINK BACK.. BACK TO FIVE YEARS AGO. YOU'D BEEN MARRIED A YEAR, AND EVA HAD WORN OFF. ONLY HER MONEY WAS IMPORTANT TO YOU THEN..

THERE, DARLING. I'VE DONE WHAT YOU'VE ASKED. I'VE MADE OUT MY NEW WILL LEAVING YOU ALL MY MONEY!

DON'T PUT IT *THAT* WAY, HONEY! IT'S JUST THAT, IN ORDER TO AVOID COMPLICATIONS..

REMEMBER THE OLD BALCONY, MARTIN, OVERLOOKING THE TINY GARDEN BEHIND THE TOWN HOUSE? HOW EVA LOVED THAT BALCONY! SHE USED TO STAND OUT THERE FOR HOURS.

COME OUT, DEAR! IT'S SUCH A LOVELY NIGHT!

IN A MOMENT, EVA!

REMEMBER THE MAD PLAN YOU'D GOTTEN? YOU'D THOUGHT IT OUT SO CAREFULLY. IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO WEAKEN THE SUPPORTS OF HER LITTLE BALCONY SOME TIME WHEN SHE WASN'T AT HOME..

THERE! THESE *WROUGHT IRON BRACES* ARE *READY TO COME LOOSE* AT THE *LEAST JARRING!*

YOU'D ENVISIONED HER STEPPING OUT ONTO THE LOOSENED BALCONY ONE NIGHT.

OH, MARTIN. COME SEE THE MOON! IT...

YOU'D EVEN SEEN IT IN YOUR MIND'S EYE SO CLEARLY.. THE BOLT'S COMING LOOSE...THE SUDDEN SAGGING .
MARTIN! MARTIN! HELP!
THE COLLAPSING OF CONCRETE AND METAL... HER AGONIZED SHRIEK..
YAEEEEEEEEEEEEE...
..AS SHE PLUNGED DOWNWARD TOWARD THE NEW SPIKE FENCE YOU'D HAVE CONVENIENTLY ERECTED .
AND YOU'D EVEN IMAGINED YOURSELF LOOKING DOWN AT THE TWITCHING IMPALED FIGURE— AND LAUGHING..
GOOD-BYE, EVA. HELLO, PARIS . LONDON ..WINE WOMEN — EH, EH, EH
YOU'D PLANNED IT ALL SO CAREFULLY... EVEN UP TO WHAT YOU'D TELL THE POLICE...
IT— IT JUST COLLAPSED! IT WAS ..SO AWFUL.. AWFUL! I WAS SO HELPLESS! I ..SO.. I COULDN'T STOP IT! I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING!
AND YOU'D PICTURED HOW SYMPATHETIC .THEY'D BE...HOW THEY'D PAT YOU ON THE BACK AND SAY
SORRY, MR SAUNDERS! IT'S BEEN AN ORDEAL FOR YOU, WE KNOW!
SORRY TO HAVE HAD TO ASK YOU ALL THESE PAINFUL QUESTIONS! A TRAGIC LOSS
LOSS? YOU'D BE LAUGHING INSIDE AT WHAT YOU'D GAINED! YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU KNEW YOU'D HAVE TO BE CAREFUL— CONCEALING YOUR GLEE — AS THEY CARRIED HER MANGLED BODY OUT, PIERCED AND TORN BY THE FENCE SPIKES .
AFTER SHE'S BURIED ..AND THE WILL IS PROBATED... I REAP NOT WEEP!

REMEMBER ALL THAT, MARTIN? REMEMBER THE PLANNING_ONDERING THE SPIKE FENCE_ITS CAREFUL PLACEMENT? NEMEMBER THAT MORNING, FIVE YEANS AGO, WHEN EVA WENT ON A SHOPPING TOUR AND YOU WERE FINALLY ABLE TO PUT YOUN PLANS INTO OPERATION?..

THERE! THESE WROUGHT IRON BRACES ARE READY TO COME LOOSE AT THE LEAST JARRING..

WHAT HAPPENED, MARTIN? WHAT HAPPENED FIVE YEARS AGO? EVA IS STILL WITH YOU. REVOLTING EVA NIGHT AFTER NIGHT..

MARTIN!

HUH?

HEN VOICE STARTLES YOU FROM YOUR REVERIE. SHE STANDS OVEN YOU, GRINNING OOWN AT YOU WITH HEN STAINED, TARNISHED, DECAYED TEETH. AND YOU SMELL HER FETID GREATH AS SHE WHISPERS..

IT'S TIME FOR BED, MARTIN!

NOT YET, EVA. PLEASE, NOT YET..

SHE IGNORES YOUR PLEAS. SHE TAKES YOUN HAND IN HENS_HEN COLD SLIMY HAND. AND SHE LEADS YOU TO THE STAINS. HEN GRIP IS STRONG_SO STRONG..

LET ME READ A LITTLE WHILE, EVA. PLEASE! I'M NOT TIRED! REALLY!

DON'T BE STUBBORN, MARTIN! COME ALONG!

SHE PULLS YOU UP THE DUST-LADEN STAIRS_UP INTO THE FOUL RANCID-SMELLING BEDNOOM ABOVE..

I NEVEN USED TO HAVE TROUBLE WITH YOU, MARTIN. NOT LONG AGO!

PLEASE... EVA.. SOO..

YOU SIT ON THE BED AND YOU HIDE YOUR HEAD IN YOUR HANDS. YOU CAN'T STAND THIS, CAN YOU, MARTIN? EVERY NIGHT, THE NITUAL. YOU CAN HEAR HER RUSTLING HER DRAG INFESTED CLOTHES.

HAVE_PITY, EVA_

BUT, DARLING! WE'RE MARRIED! REMEMBER?

YOU CAN HEAR THEM FALLING TO THE FLOOR, WHISPING UP A RANK CLOUD OF DUST. AND MUCH AS YOU TRY, YOU CANNOT HELP BUT LOOK. YOU CANNOT STOP YOURSELF FROM LOOKING AT YOUR WIFE'S BODY..

CHOKE_

THAT'S BETTER, DEAR.

YOU STARE AT HER BLOATED ROTTING FLESH THAT EVEN NOW FALLS AWAY IN TINY DRIED PARTICLES.

OH, *LORD*, EVA! *WON'T YOU LET ME GO?*

I *CAN'T*, DARLING!

YOU STARE AT THE GAPING HOLES ACROSS HER BACK WHERE THE FENCE SPIKES CAME THROUGH...

I'M *SORRY*, EVA! I'M *SORRY*! *PLEASE*! *FOR GOD'S SAKE*! *GO BACK*! *GO BACK*! *PLEASE*—

BUT THAT WOULD MEAN *LEAVING* YOU, MARTIN, DARLING! AND I *CAN'T DO THAT*!

AND YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN *NEVER* LEAVE HER, MARTIN SAUNDERS! YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU EVER *TRIED*, SHE WOULD *FIND* YOU. *SHE*...OR THE *POLICE*! BECAUSE, SHE'D *GO* TO THEM...AND *SHOW* THEM. SO YOU STARE AT THE WOMAN YOU *MURDERED* FIVE YEARS AGO... THE WOMAN WHO *CAME BACK FROM HER GRAVE* TO *LIVE* WITH YOU AGAIN...TO LIVE WITH YOU BECAUSE SHE'D TAKEN A *VOW*... *A VOW SHE MEANT TO KEEP*!...

TILL DEATH DO US PART, MARTIN! *REMEMBER*? WE *BOTH PROMISED*! THAT MEANS TILL *BOTH* OF US DIE! *NOT JUST ONE*! SO YOU SEE, I *CAN'T* LEAVE YOU! *NOT YET*! NOW...COME TO BED!

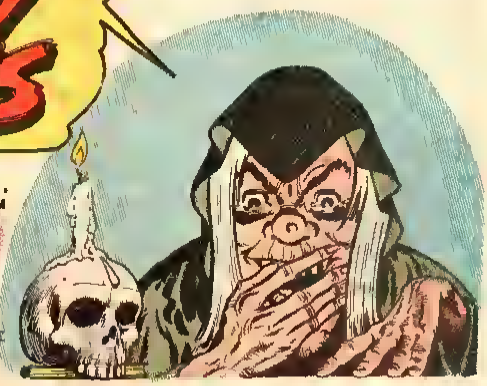
OH..LORD... CHOKE...

HEE, HEE! NOW *THERE'S* A GAL THAT BELIEVES IN *LIVING UP TO HER PROMISE*... OR *DEADING* UP TO IT, TO BE MORE ACCURATE. SHE'S *KEEPING* HER *MARRIAGE VOW* EVEN IF SHE'S *NOT KEEPING VERY WELL, HERSELF*! WELL, *ENOUGH* OF *THIS ROT*! *THE VAULT-KEEPER* AWAITS WITH *HIS* FIENDISH FABLE. *I'LL* BE BACK *LATER* WITH *ANOTHER HORROR HELPING* FROM MY *CRUDDY CAULDRON*. LET ME JUST LEAVE YOU WITH THIS ONE THOUGHT. THE MOTTO OF ALL GOOD LITTLE GHOULS: "NEVER PUT OFF TILL TOMORROW WHAT YOU CAN CHEW TODAY!" 'BYE, NOW!

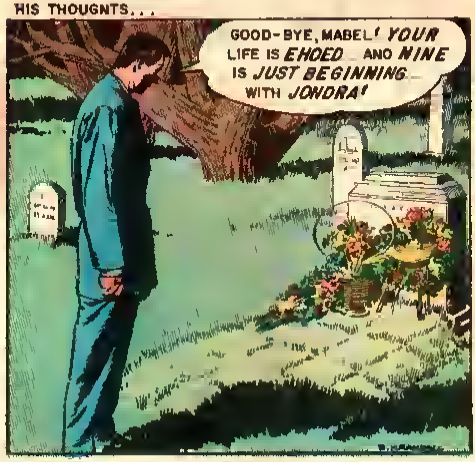
THE VAULT OF HORROR!®

HEH, HEH! AND NOW THAT YOU'VE *DINED*, LET'S *DANCE!* *WALTZ* INTO THE *VAULT*, CREEPS... *THE VAULT OF HORROR* WHERE YOUR *REVAULTING* RACONTEUR...*THE VAULT-KEEPER* .THAT'S *ME* WILL *ELECTRIFY* YOU WITH A *HIGH-VAULTAGE* YOWL YARN. AND IT WON'T BE *NY VAULT* IF IT DOESN'T *CURL YOUR HAIR!* THIS *HUNK* OF *HORROR HEAVINGS* IS CALLED...

The SHADOW KNOWS



WITH A SOFT THUD, THE LAST SHOVELFUL OF DIRT HAD BEEN FLUNG UPON THE FRESH MOUND AND PATTED DOWN, HIDING THE COFFIN AND ITS STIFF WHITE OCCUPANT FROM THE SUNLIGHT FOREVER. THE SMALL SILENT GROUP OF FRIENDS HAD TURNED AWAY AND LEFT. THE FUNERAL WAS OVER. ONLY A MEMORY REMAINED OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A LIVING BREATHING HUMAN BEING. ERIC COOPER STOOD ALONE, STARING AT HIS WIFE'S GRAVE. HIS LONG SHADOW, THROWN BY THE SETTING SUN, WAS A GRAVEN IMAGE IN A PATHETIC POSE OF DEJECTION. HE WAS THE PERFECT PICTURE OF A GRIEF-STRICKEN HUSBAND IN A PAROXYSM OF DEEP MOURNING. EXCEPT FOR HIS THOUGHTS...



ERIC STOOD THERE, NOT MOURNING AT ALL. HE GLOATED. GLOATED OVER HIS MURDEROUS SECRET...

SWEET SOUNDS SEEMED TO FILL THE TWILIGHT AIR AROUND ERIC... LIKE THE TINKLING AND CLINKING OF COINS. THEY FORMED A BACKGROUND MUSIC AS HIS THOUGHTS RACED INTO THE PAST... A WEEK AGO... WHEN HE'D CHECKED INTO THE HOTEL IN DOVER ON HIS ROUTE AS A TRAVELING SALESMAN, AND HE'D DROPPED COINS INTO THE PAY PHONE IN THE LOBBY...

HELLO, BABY! GUESS WHO?

ERIC! DARLING! WHEN DID YOU GET IN? STAY THERE! I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN AND PICK YOU UP!

JONDRA'D BEEN MAD ABOUT ERIC EVER SINCE THEY'D FIRST MET AND HE'D TALKED GLIBLY TO HER... FEEDING HER HIS LINES... BREAKING DOWN HER RESISTANCE. ERIC HAD ENJOYED THE AFFAIR... PERHAPS MORE THAN THE OTHER GIRLS IN OTHER TOWNS. BUT HE'D NOT KNOWN HOW SERIOUS JONDRA WAS ABOUT HIM UNTIL THAT DAY A WEEK AGO WHEN SHE'D PICKED HIM UP IN HER CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE AND DRIVEN OUT TO A QUIET SPOT AND SAID...

ERIC! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO ASK ME TO MARRY YOU?

HUH? I... UH... YOU MEAN... YOU MEAN YOU WOULD, JONDRA?

OF COURSE, DARLING! I LOVE YOU! THERE'S... THERE'S NO ONE ELSE, IS THERE? YOU SAID YOU'RE NOT MARRIED! I COULD MAKE US BOTH HAPPY, ERIC. AFTER ALL, I AM RATHER WELL OFF!

I... UH... WELL I NEVER DREAMED, JONDRA! LET ME... LET ME THINK IT OVER!

YES, HE'D TOLD JONDRA HE WASN'T MARRIED! BUT HE'D LIED! AND LATER THAT DAY, IN HIS HOTEL ROOM, ERIC HAD CURSED FATE...

A MILLION BUCKS THROWN AT ME AND I CAN'T GRAB IT! WHY DO I HAVE TO BE MARRIED? IF I WERE FREE OF MABEL, I COULD TAKE JONDRA AND HER DOUGH AND LIVE ON EASY STREET. IF I WERE... FREE...

ERIC'S HIGH-PRESSURE SALES TECHNIQUE HAD BEEN AS IRRESISTABLE TO HIMSELF AS TO OTHERS. HE QUICKLY SOLD HIMSELF ON THE IDEA...

I CAN'T LET A FORTUNE SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS! IF MABEL WERE TO DIE FROM... SAY... SUICIDE... WHILE I WAS ON THE ROAD... WHO'D PIN IT ON ME?

THE PLAN HAD SHAPED SWIFTLY AS HE'D SORTED THROUGH THE STEADY FAITHFUL LOVING LETTERS FROM MABEL THAT HAD FOLLOWED HIM EVERYWHERE...

THIS ONE IS IT! HER "SUICIDE NOTE"! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS CLIP OFF THE LAST TWO LINES HERE... AND WITH HER SIGNATURE... IT WILL BE PERFECT!

Dear Darling Eric, Come home soon. I'm about to empty my bottle of sleeping pills. You know how much I hate the lonely life I can't stand it long. Eric... all my love goodbye Mabel

SO ERIC HAD SCISSORED OFF THE LOVING BEGINNING OF THE LETTER, AND THE REMAINDER HAD BECOME...

THE PINING OF A NEUROTIC LONELY WOMAN... FEELING SORRY FOR HERSELF... TAKING THE EASY WAY OUT! THE NEIGHBORS TOLD ME HOW UNHAPPY SHE IS WHEN I'M ON THE ROAD!

THE REST HAD BEEN RELATIVELY SIMPLE! FIRST... *THE IRON CLAD ALIBI*... IN THAT TOWN SO FAR AWAY...

YAWNNN! MY KEY PLEASE, AND I'VE HAD A *VERY HARD* DAY, JOHN, SO *PLEASE DON'T LET ANYTHING OR ANYBODY DISTURB ME TONIGHT!* WAKE ME AT *NINE* IN THE MORNING!

YES SIR, MR. COOPER.

THEN... THE *CLIMB DOWN THE FIRE-ESCAPE* OUTSIDE HIS WINDOW... INTO THE DESERTED ALLEY WHERE HE'D PARKED HIS CAR...

NO ONE SAW ME DRIVE IT *IN*. NO ONE SEES ME *LEAVE*! *PERFECT*...

THE HIGH-SPEED DASH FROM DOVER TO HIS HOME TOWN - ALONG ROADS HE KNEW SO WELL. AVOIDING TRAFFIC - AND STATE TROOPERS...

GOT TO MAKE *TWO HUNDRED MILES* IN A LITTLE OVER *THREE HOURS*. THAT MEANS *WIDE OPEN ALL THE WAY*...

LETTING HIMSELF INTO THE HOUSE... SILENTLY... USING HIS KEY

THE QUICK NERVE PUNCH THAT LEFT NO MARK - *KNOCKING OUT HIS SLEEPING WIFE*...

THE HOME-MADE SCAFFOLD, THE KITCHEN STOOL. THE CRUDELY MADE *HANGMAN'S KNOT* TIED TO THE CELLAR BEAM AND *CARRYING HIS WIFE'S UNCONSCIOUS FORM DOWN*

STANDING HER ON THE STOOL AND *SLIPPING HER NECK INTO THE NOOSE*... *KICKING THE STOOL AWAY*...

WATCHING HER *COME TO* IN THE LAST INSTANT BEFORE SHE'D STRANGLED TO DEATH - KICKING - STRUGGLING - HER BULGING EYES STARING...

AND FINALLY, BEFORE THE MAD DASH BACK, *THE SUICIDE NOTE* PLACED CONVENIENTLY WHERE IT WOULD BE FOUND.

RIGHT ON SCHEDULE!

AND SO, AT NINE THAT MONNING, HE'D ANSWENED THE CLENK'S KNOCK...

GOOD MORNING, MN. COOPEN. THIS TELEGRAM CAME AT EIGHT. I DIDN'T WANT TO DISTUNB YOU!

THANKS, JOHM! AND I MEEDED THAT SLEEP..

HE'D ACTED SO WELL... AS HE'D OPENED THE MESSABE...

BEST SLEEP I'VE HAD IN MONTHS! I... I..*OH, MY GOD!*

WHAT *IS* IT, MR. COOPEN? *BAD NEWS?*

HE'D LEFT OOVER IMMEDIATELY... THE GRIEF-STRICKEN HUSBAND. AT THE INQUEST, THE NEIGHBONS HAD ADDED THEIN EVIDENCE...

POOR MR. COOPER! IT WASN'T *HIS* FAULT HE HAD TO EANM A LIVING ON THE ROAD. BUT SHE WAS ALWAYS SO *DEPRESSED* WHEN HE WAS GONE! NEVEN *SMILED* ON ANYTHING! ALWAYS FEELIN' *SORRY* FON HENSELF... BEIN' ALONE!

AND, TOGETHEN WITH THE SUICIDE NOTE, THE CORONER'S JURY HAD BNOUGHT IN THEIN VERDICT...

DEATH BY SUICIDE! THE BODY OF THE DECEASED TO BE TURNED OVEN TO THE SURVIVING SPOUSE FON BURIAL! CASE CLOSED!

AND NOW THE TINKLING SOUND WAS THE TINKLING OF GOLD IN DISTANT OOVER. JONONA'S GOLD. WAITING FOR HIM. ENIC COOPER'S THOUGHTS NETURNED TO THE PNESENT. HE TURNED AWAY FROM THE GRAVE, SMILING. IT WAS DARK NOW. THE MOON HAD RISEN, CASTING ITS COLD GLOW OVEN THE GRAVEYARD...

GO NOW I'M *FREE*.. FREE OF *MABEL*... FREE OF *ANY SHADOW OF SUSPICION*...

BUT ENIC WAS *WRONG!* FOR AS HE LEFT MABEL'S GRAVE, HE WASN'T FREE OF *ANY* SHADOW. THERE WAS HIS *OWN*... AND *ONE OTHER*...

SOMETHING BOTHERED ENIC AS HE CROSSED THE GRAVE-MOUNDS AND NEARED THE CEMETERY GATE. HE HAD A QUEER UNEASY FEELING... AS IF... AS IF...

SOMEBODY'S *FOLLOWING* ME! I CAN ALMOST *TELL!* I.. I... *GOOD LORD!* WHAT'S THAT?

HE STOOD ROOTED TO THE SPOT, HIS SCALP CRAWLING...

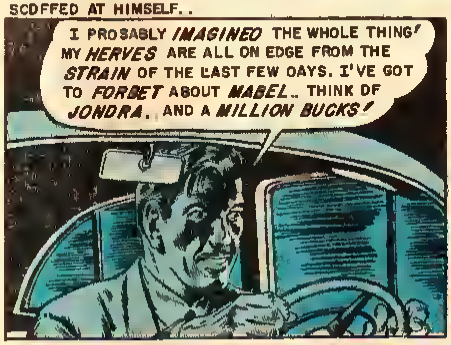
TWO SHADOWS! AND *ONE*—ONE IS THE SHADOW OF A *WOMAN!* IT *LOOKS* LIKE.. *NO!* IT *CAN'T* BE! SHE'S *BURIED!* SHE'S *DEAD!* SHE'S *SIX FEET UNDER!* IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!* IT—*NO! NO!*

HE RAN, THEN, IN WILD DREAD. HE DARED NDT LDOK BEHIND. HE TDLD HIMSELF THAT THENE COULD BE NO EXTRA SHADOW RIPPLING AND DANCING ALONG WITH HIS OWN.

HE REACHED THE HOUSE...DASHED IN...SLAMMED THE DOOR. HE STOOD THERE IN THE DARKNESS, BREATHING HEAVILY. FINALLY, HE SWITCHED DN THE LIGHT AND PDURED HIMSELF A GOOD STIFF ORINK. THEN...

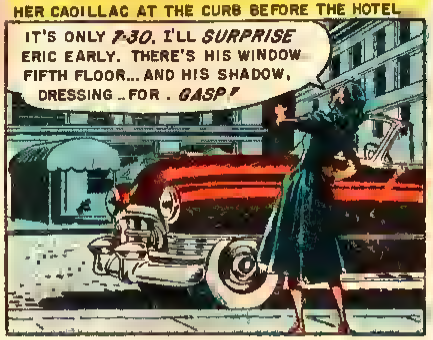
HE STUMBLED DUT TO HIS CAR. BEHIND HIM, THE UNEARTHLY SHADOW PAUSED ON THE FRONT LAWN. HESITATING IN A POSE OF INFINITE SADNESS ...AS IF POWERLESS TO LEAVE... AS IF SIGHING IN MEMORY OF A LOST LIFE AND LOVE...

AS THE MILES REELED OFF, ERIC FELT BETTER. HE SCOFFED AT HIMSELF..

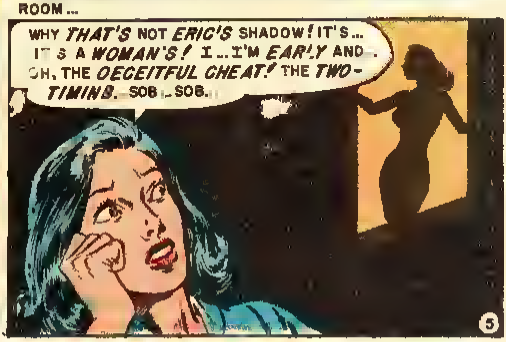


AT DOVER, THE NEXT MORNING, WITH SUNLIGHT STREAMING INTD HIS HOTEL RODM, ERIC HAPPILY PHONED JONDRA...

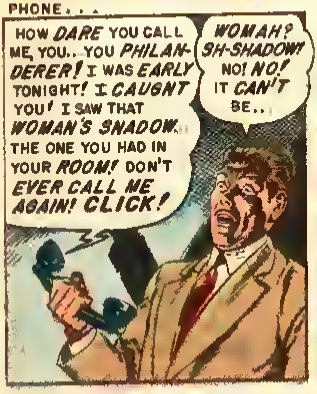
BUT LIKE THE ANXIDUS LOVER, JONDRA WAS EARLY FOR HER DATE THAT NIGHT. AS SHE STEPPED FRDM HER CADILLAC AT THE CURB BEFORE THE HOTEL



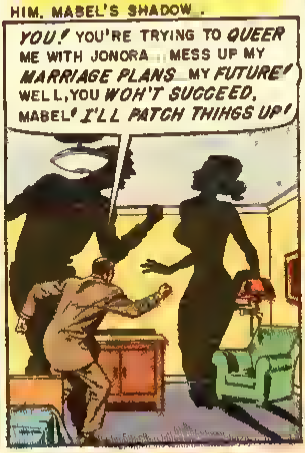
JONDRA FROZE IN JEALOUS SURPRISE AS SHE STUDIED THE SHADOW MOVING LITHELY OVER THE DRAWN SHADE OF ERIC'S ROOM...



PUZZLED AS 8 O'CLOCK CAME AND WENT... THEN NINE... AND NO JONDRA, ERIC PHONED HER HOUSE AND SAT STUNNED BY THE FURIOUS VOICE THAT POURED FROM THE PHONE...

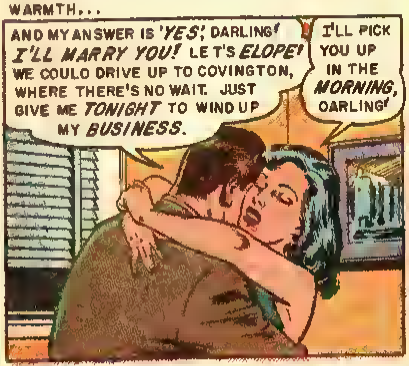


ERIC LOOKED AROUND - HELPLESS. THE SHADOW WAS THERE. MOCKING HIM. MABEL'S SHADOW.

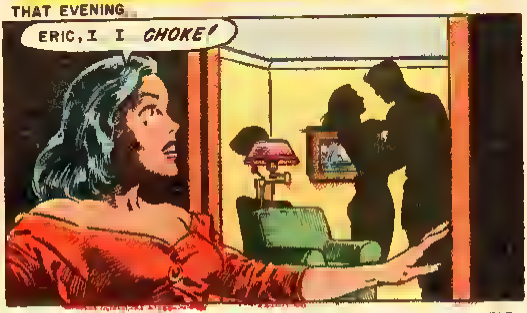


AND THE NEXT MORNING, WITH THE SHADOW GONE, JONDRA SWALLOWED ERIC'S STORY...

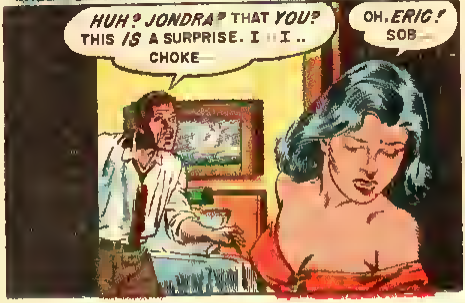
HE HELD HER CLOSE, FEELING HER WOMAN'S WARMTH... ONE MILLION BUCKS WORTH OF WARMTH...



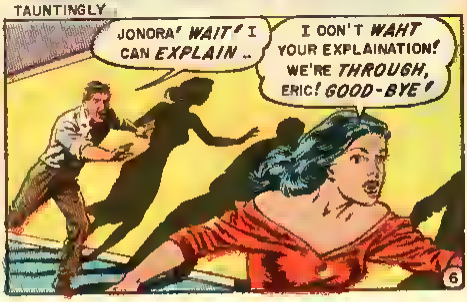
ERIC HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO PUSH OFF THE WEDDING TILL MORNING. HE SENSED THAT MABEL'S SHADOW SHUNNED DAYLIGHT. HE WANTED TO PLAY IT SAFE. BUT JONDRA WAS A WOMAN, AND A WOMAN IS A SUSPICIOUS CREATURE. SHE WAS CURIOUS ABOUT ERIC'S 'BUSINESS'. SO SHE PAID HIM A SURPRISE VISIT THAT EVENING...



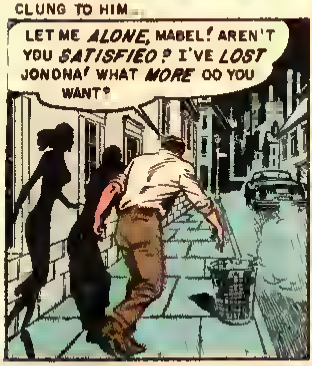
THIS TIME, THERE WAS NO MISTAKE. SHE'D GONE UP UNANNOUNCED.. AND PUSHED OPEN HIS HOTEL ROOM DOOR. AND SHE'D SEEN THE TWO SHADOWS ON THE WALL. ERIC'S AND THE WOMAN'S. EMBRACING...



JONDRA FLEW FROM THE HOTEL ROOM, CRYING HYSTERICALLY. WHAT SHE'D SEEN ON THE HOTEL-ROOM WALL HAD BEEN PROOF ENOUGH FOR HER. ERIC HAD SEEN IT TOO. HE HURRIED AFTER HER, MABEL'S SHADOW FOLLOWED, TAUNTINGLY.



ERIC STAGGERED AFTER JONDRA'S ROANING CAR AS IT SPED INTO THE NIGHT. HE WANDERED, DAZED, UNABLE TO ELUDE THE SHADOW THAT CLUNG TO HIM. . AS MABEL HAD ALWAYS CLUNG TO HIM...



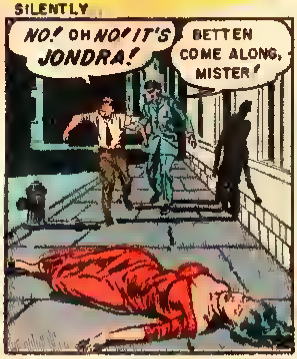
JONDRA STOPPED HER CAR, SOBBING SHE SHOOK HER HEAD. HAD HER EYES DECEIVED HER BACK THERE IN THE HOTEL ROOM? WERE TWO LAMPS LIT, CASTING ERIC'S OWN DOUBLE SHADOW ON THAT WALL? WAS THIS ALL SOME JEALOUS NIGHTMARE? SHE GOT OUT OF THE CAR, STARTED RUNNING BACK TOWARD THE HOTEL. SHE NEVER NOTICED THE WOMAN'S SHADOW RIPPLING ALONG AFTER HER OWN. . . ITS CLUTCHING HANDS EXTENDED...

ERIC KNELT IN THE DESERTED STREET, TYING HIS LOOSENED SHOELACE. THE DISTANT STREETLAMP CAST HIS SHADOW HIGH UP ON THE WAREHOUSE WALL ACROSS THE CORNER. SUDDENLY, AN EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM REVERBERATED THROUGH THE NIGHT...

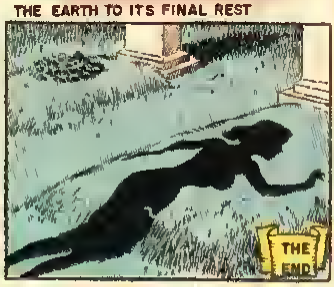
AROUND THE CORNER, THE COP POUNDING HIS LONESOME BEAT LISTENED, HORRIFIED, AS THE SCREAM DIED AWAY INTO THE NIGHT IN A CHOKING GURGLE. HE STARED AT THE SHADOWS, MASSIVE AND LIKE VELVET BLACK GIANT PHANTOMS, ON THE WAREHOUSE WALL... THE SHADOW OF THE MAN BENDING OVER .. AND THE SHADOW OF THE WOMAN AT HIS FEET, IN A DEATH STRUGGLE...

ERIC KNELT, FROZEN, LISTENING TO THE FADING SCREAM, AND THEN HE SAW THE SHADOWS ON THE BUILDING FACE... HIS AND MABEL'S AND SUDDENLY HE BEGAN TO RUN... WILDLY ... CONFUSED .. FRIGHTENED... INTO THE ARMS OF THE POLICEMAN JUST ROUNDING THE CORNER...

THE POLICEMAN NODDED TOWARD THE CRUMPLED FORM LYING UP THE BLOCK. THEY MOVED TOWARD IT SILENTLY...



THE TRIAL WAS SHORT. ERIC'S RIDICULOUS DEFENSE ABOUT MABEL'S SHADOW WAS TORN TO PIECES. HE WAS EXECUTED SOON AFTER AND BURIED IN THE GRAVE BESIDE MABEL'S. ONLY THEN DID A WOMAN'S SHADOW TURN AND WITH SILENT SATISFACTION, SLIP BACK INTO THE EARTH TO ITS FINAL REST...



HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S MY SHADY TALE FOR THIS ISSUE OF THE OLD HAG'S MAG, KIDDIES. SO NEXT TIME YOU GET THAT CREEPY FEELING... MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT BEING SHADOWED! AND NOW, I'LL CAST YOU OUT OF THE VALE AND BACK TO THE OLD WITCH FOR ANOTHER OF HER SLOP SERVINGS. I HAVE ENJOYED HAVING YOU WITH ME, AS THE FIREFLY SAID WHEN HE BACKED INTO THE ELECTRIC FAN .. "I'VE BEEN DELIGHTED!" BYE, NOW!

HOT HEAD

With a crowbar, Tengard began to pry the freight door loose. Grunting aloud, he felt sweat skiddering down the small of his back as his arms strained to crack the metal seal on the grimy railroad car. Slowly the steel lock began to creak . . . inch by inch it opened. Another thirty seconds . . . fifteen . . . five . . .

The rasping voice coming at him from down the tracks made Tengard whirl in surprise. Past the lines of freight cars jammed into the smoky yard he saw the bulky man lunging forward: something in the beefy face and the flat-footed wobble sent a spasm of fear tremoring through Tengard.

"Watcha doin' with that lock, bum?" the rasping voice demanded as it shambled nearer. "Drop that lousy crowbar before I wrap it around your skull!"

The puffing face was close now, its beady eyes glowering out from under bushy brows. The beefy man began to snarl again, as his hand stabbed for his shoulder holster. Tengard gulped air, like a drowning man . . . then gripped the crowbar and slashed out violently.

The railroad detective went down with a scream of pain and a gush of dark red blood. Tengard's eyes popped wide and a nervous wheeze giggled from his trembling lips. He stepped forward and crashed downward with the dripping crowbar; the agonized wail stopped immediately. The enemy was dead.

Tengard heard excited voices and running feet. Glancing around wildly, he spotted an uncovered freight car. Dropping the crowbar, he fled down the tracks. Then, digging his fingers against the metal skin, he swung up the side of the car and dropped with a groan onto a jagged pile of coal.

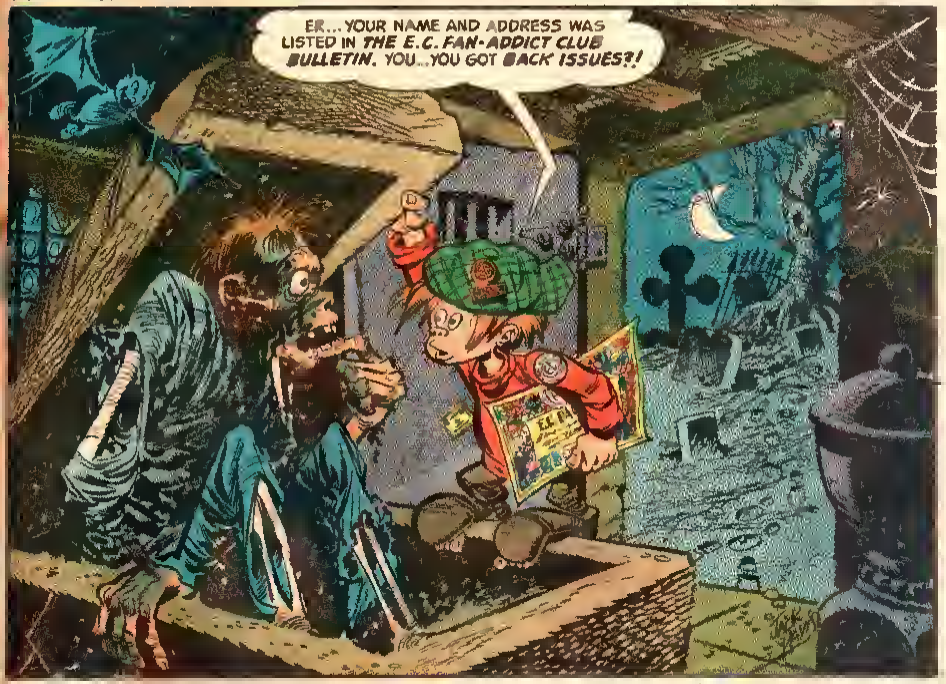
The steps were coming closer now; the voices echoed through the yard as they searched for the dead man. Tengard shook the frightened perspiration from his eyes, knotted his fists to stop the convulsive trembling of his body, and began to burrow like a frenzied animal. The knife edges tore at his flesh and shredded his clothing; the black dust swathed his eyes and clogged his gaping mouth. But the feet were pounding by now . . . Tengard crouched and held his breath. He'd *escaped!*

Suddenly, the train lurched forward, lumbering ponderously as if its wheels were square. Tengard started to claw his way out of the coal pile, when the train jarred to an unexpected stop. The coal began to shift furiously on the floor of the car, and his feet shot out from under him. With a roar, the coal began to crash out of the car, down through a rusty chute which had just opened. With a screech of terror, Tengard felt himself being sucked downwards . . down the chute . . . down with the crashing avalanche.

It was hot . . . so searing hot that the breath was smashed from him. And bright . . . the explosion of color blinded him and he shrieked in pain. The skin began to flake off his writhing body like scales from a dead fish His lungs puffed up until they seemed to be jamming up into the raw wound of his throat; he felt himself floating in a hideous vapor. And all around him was a thunderous roar . . . and a ghastly heat . . . a shimmering, agonizing, torturing heat . . .

All the railroad firemen found, when they cleaned the roundhouse furnace the next day, were a few puzzling slivers of charred bone.

NOW...IF YOU JOIN...YOU GET THE BULLETIN...FREE!



YES, FANS... YOU, TOO, CAN BE LUCKY LIKE MELVIN, HERE! YOU, TOO, CAN COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION OF E.C.'S! YOU, TOO, CAN JOIN THE

E. C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB

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* * * * * * * * * *

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* (SO WHO'S GONNA FOOT THE *BILL* FOR THE *BULLETINS*, *US!?* SURE WE HAD TO *RAISE THE PRICE!* SO *SUE US!*)

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
NEW YORK, 12, N. Y.

So here's my 50¢! So I could've joined for half the price a couple of months back* So now I get a bulletin subscription. So who says I want it. So I'm a sucker. So put me down and send me the stuff what the kid's wearing and the bulletin I don't want but I'm paying for...

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZONE NO. _____

* (NO 25¢ MEMBERSHIP WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER JUNE 1, 1954)

THE OLD WITCH'S NICHE

Hee, hee! I don't know how you do it, but you do it! Nominations for additions to E.C.'s Horror Hit Parade keep pouring in. These latest terror-tunes were suggested by Bob Ringenberger, Cheviot, Ohio, Eddie Erler, Indianapolis, Ind.; Bill Allen, Honolulu, Hawaii; Nick Andrsen, Newark, N. J.; Leoniece Baer, N. Y. C., Fred Costello, Chicago, Ill., Nauseating Nancy, Laurelton, N. Y.; Paul Anderson, Sioux Falls, S. D.; Joe Legere, Lynn, Mass; and Paul Gemba, North Bergen, N. J.:

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A SLIT-HEART
LIVER, COME BACK TO ME
OH, BLIND PAPA!
SANTA'S CRAZY
FROM THE SPINE CAME THE CREPE
WITH MY EYES LAYED OPEN I'M SCREAMING
MANY SLIMES
BREAK MY HAND (I M A STRANGLER IN PARADISE)
SEW MINE PAPA
WHIP THESE HANDS
SAY, SEE BLOOD!
GIVE ME FIVE MAGGOTS MORE
WHALING, WHALING, OVER THE BODY MAIMED
OOZE THAT S KNOCKING AT MY DOOR
WHEN THE BLOOD HITS YOUR EYE FROM A PUTRID OLD GUY (THAT'S A MURDER)
YOU SAW ME CHOKING ON AN APPLE
LI'L LIZA'S PAIN
I'M SLITTING THE TOP OFF OF EARL

And now for some PUTRID POETRY penned by Artie Zeller of N.Y.C.:

It was just a little over two years ago
That I started reading the thing.
At that time I thought, of course,
It would just be a passing fling

"I can throw it away," I said to myself,
"At any time I please!"
But time went on, and I found myself
Like a rat, attracted to cheese

This fascination, I thought, is bound to wear out
How long can it keep me attracted?
But curiosity urged me on and on
To each story I reacted

I was trapped like the rat attracted to cheese
Like the addict (when without it, in pain)
These volumes of gore are the things that please
You see, E C HAS DRIVEN ME SANE!

And this gem by Frank Dupre, also of N.Y.C.:

When I was one and twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Go up and down the main drags.
"From tha alleys keep away!"
But I was one and twenty
And stubborn as a mule
Now I am two and twenty ..
In the stomach of a ghoul!

Anne Lovett of Baltimore, Md. is responsible for this:

She vamped her way through N. Y State
She vamped from Maine to New Hampshire
And all the men used to dig her stuff
Till they found that she was a vampire

Stanley Goldman of Kansas City, Mo. submits this sonnet:

There once was a ghoul who lived in a bin
His favorite dish was dead human skin
He went out every night seeking some prey
So he wouldn't be hungry the very next day.
One night, as usual, he was out on the street,
Waiting for someone he could nibble and eat
When he saw a figure he thought he could rally,
He chased the poor soul into a one exit alley
But when he looked at the face, he began to perspire
'Cause now *he* was trapped by a thirsty vampire

Arnold Zalesin and Allan Rosner of Detroit, Mich. wind things up with:

Mary had a little lamb
She liked it, oh so well
She fed it a box of T N T
And blew it straight to a lot of squishy, putrid slimy pieces

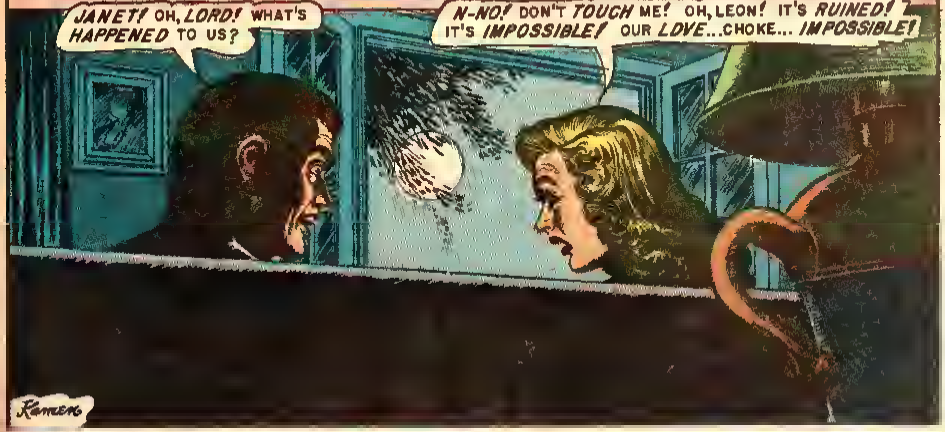
Subscriptions: One buck for eight issues manila envelopes... hip, hip! Keep sending in nonsense like the above ... makes this column easy to write! Address for stuff:

The Old Witch
Room 706, Dept. 26
225 Lafayette St.
N Y C 12, N Y

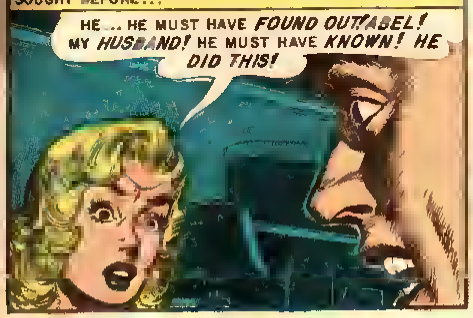
HERE'S A SWITCH...A TERROR-TALE OF A LOVE THAT WAS...

SPOILED

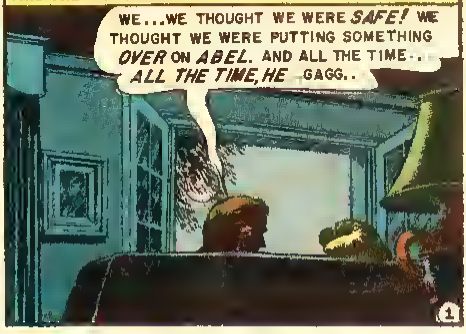
THEY'D SEEN MADLY IN LOVE, JANET GROVER AND LEON PAYNE. THEIR PASSION HAD SEEN WILD... BURNING... TEMPESTUOUS. THE SITUATION HAD BEEN PERFECT FOR THEIR TRYST, WITH JANET'S HUSBAND SO VERY FAR AWAY. YET, NOW, SITTYING UPON THE SOFA BEFORE THE OPEN FRENCH DOORS WITH THE WIND OUTSIDE MURMURING THROUGH THE TREES AND THE SOFT MOONLIGHT FILTERING DOWN INTO THE SEMI-DARKENED ROOM, THE LOVERS STARE AT EACH OTHER IN GROWING CRAWLING HORROR. THEIR HEARTS FREEZE IN SUDDEN DREAD. THEIR STOMACHS HEAVE IN SUDDEN LOATHING...



JANET GROVER'S FACE IS A MASK OF REVULSION AS SHE DRAWS AWAY, SHUDDERING, AVOIDING THE CARESSING HANDS AND WORDS OF ENDEARMENT SHE'D SO EAGERLY SOUGHT BEFORE...



LEON PAYNE'S FACE IS TWISTED INTO AN EXPRESSION OF HELPLESS FURY. HE STARES IN DISGUST AT THIS CREATURE BESIDE HIM...



BITTER TEARS WELL UP IN JANET'S EYES... SPILLING DOWN HER CHEEKS. SHE SOBS QUIETLY OVER THIS INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIER THAT HAS BEEN BRUTALLY PLACED BETWEEN THEM. . A BARRIER SO GREAT THAT NO LOVE, NO MATTER HOW STRONG, COULD EVER CLIMB IT. SHE SHAKES HER HEAD.

BUT WE WERE SO *CAREFUL!* SO *CLEVER!* WE WERE *SURE* HE WAS FOOLED! WHERE DID WE *FAIL*, LEON? *WHERE?*

I... I *DON'T KNOW!*

CURIOUS, KIDDIES? WONDERING *WHAT* ABEL GROVER COULD HAVE *DONE* SO *EFFECTIVELY*. SO *DECISIVELY* TO BRING TO THIS *SUDDEN END* JANET'S AND LEON'S *PASSIONATE ATTRACTION* FOR ONE ANOTHER? HEE, HEE! WELL, I'LL *TELL* YOU! BUT *FIRST*... LET'S GO *BACK* A FEW MONTHS LET'S LOOK IN ON JANET AND ABEL GROVER IN THOSE *'GOOD OLD DAYS' BEFORE LEON*

LET'S LOOK IN ON JANET'S *PAST* LIFE WITH ABEL GROVER... THE BRILLIANT SURGEON. OR RATHER, LET'S LOOK IN ON HER LIFE *WITHOUT* HIM...

SORRY, DEAR! THAT WAS THE *HOSPITAL!* *EMERGENCY APPENDECTOMY!* I'VE *GOT* TO *LEAVE!*

OH, *ABEL!* THAT MEANS *ANOTHER EVENING ALONE* FOR ME. BEING A DOCTOR'S WIFE CAN BE *SO LONELY!*

WHY DON'T YOU GO *OUT*, DEAR? I'LL LEAVE YOU THE *CAR!* SEE A *MOVIE* OR SOMETHING.

I DON'T *WANT* TO SEE A MOVIE! I WANT TO BE WITH *YOU!*

SORRY, HON! NOTHING *I* CAN DO! YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GET *USED* TO IT! GOOD-NIGHT! DON'T WAIT UP...

G'NIGHT... YOU *MEAN THING...*

AND EVEN WHEN *NO CALLS* CAME FOR ABEL... EVEN WHEN HE WAS ABLE TO ENJOY ONE OF THOSE RARE EVENINGS OF FREEDOM AT HOME, JANET WOULD END UP IN A 'MEDICAL WIDOWHOOD'...

IF YOU *WANT* ME, I'LL BE IN MY *LABORATORY*, DEAR. CAN'T LET AN IDLE EVENING GO TO *WASTE*. GOT TO PUT IT TO GOOD USE WORKING ON THAT NEW *ANESTHETIC* OF MINE...

YES, ABEL...

THUS, JANET HAD SPENT LONG LONELY EVENINGS IN HER BIG, EMPTY HOUSE ALONE... NEGLECTED... IGNORED... GROWING MORE AND MORE *DESPERATE*, WHILE ABEL'D HURRIED OFF ON CALLS OR PUTTERED BELOW IN HIS CELLAR LABORATORY TILL ALL HOURS...

SOB... SOB...

AND A DESPERATE WOMAN IS CAPABLE OF DOING DESPERATE THINGS...

FRONTAL LOBOTOMY TONIGHT! A FOUR HOUR PROPOSITION AT LEAST! WELL... GOODNIGHT...

CAN YOU TAKE A CAB TONIGHT, DEAR? I'D LIKE THE CAR! I'D LIKE TO GO OUT!

OF COURSE, DEAR! THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA! WHY DON'T YOU VISIT ALICE... OR YOUR MOTHER... OR TAKE IN THE SNOW AT THE BIJOU?

I'LL DO SOMETHING, ASEL! DON'T WORRY...

AND SO IT'D BEGUN. JANET HAD WANTED TO DO SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT. SHE'D WANTED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT A VOID THAT HAD COME INTO HER LIFE... A LONGING... A DESPERATION... A HUNGER THAT NEEDED TO BE SATISFIED...

YES, MA'AM!

A... A WHISKEY SOUR, PLEASE!

AND SHE'D FOUND A WAY TO FILL THAT EMPTY VOID IN HER LONELY LIFE. SHE'D FOUND IT THAT VERY FIRST NIGHT IN THAT LITTLE ROADSIDE SPOT OUTSIDE OF TOWN. SHE'D FOUND SOMEONE ELSE AS DESPERATE AS SHE. LEON...

SHE'S COLD... UNFEELING... LACKING IN PASSION... AT LEAST AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, ANYWAY! SO NOW YOU KNOW!

WE'RE BOTH LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, AREN'T WE, LEON? THE SAME THING!

THEY WERE LIKE TWO LOST TRAVELERS IN A LOVELESS DARK FROZEN WORLD, CLINGING TO EACH OTHER FOR WARMTH...

OH, DARLING... YOU'D BETTER GO! ASEL WILL BE HOME SOON!

I... I'M CRAZY FOR COMING HERE, JANET! THIS IS INSANE!

YES, INSANE! THE WHOLE MAD AFFAIR WAS INSANE. AND YET IT COULDN'T BE STOPPED. CAN YOU STOP AN AVALANCHE ONCE IT STARTS TO THUNDER WILDLY DOWN A MOUNTAINSIDE? CAN YOU STOP A WATERFALL FROM POURING STEAMILY OVER A CLIFF?...

LEON? COME OVER! HE'S DOWNSTAIRS IN HIS LABORATORY! I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU!

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND, JANET!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MY SWEET! HE GOES DOWN THERE LIKE THIS FOR HOURS. I CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN HE'S ABOUT TO COME UP. THE LIGHT GOES OFF IN THE LAB. YOU CAN SEE IT ON THE GARDEN WALL! COME OVER! IT'S PERFECTLY SAFE!

I... I DON'T LIKE IT! STILL... I DO WANT TO SEE YOU! I... I CAN'T SAY 'NO'!

AND SO, WHILE ABEL GROVER'D EXPLONED THE *MYSTERIES* OF *MEDICAL SCIENCE* IN HIS CELLAN LABONATORY. . .

IF IT WENE POSSIBLE TO *FREEZE* THE BODY FUNCTIONS... *SUSPEND* THEM FON A *LONG PERIOD* VIA SOME *NEW ANESTHETIC*... WHY, THE MOST *DIFFICULT* THE ALMOST *IMPOSSIBLE* OF SURGICAL OPENATIONS COULD BE *PERFORMED!* AND *THIS FORMULA* MAY BE THE *KEY*. . .

. . . JANET AND LEON HAD EXPLORED THE *SWEETER MYSTERIES* OF *HUMAN EMOTION*. . .

OH, DARLING. . .

SWEET...

THE LIGHT! IT'S GONE OFF! HURRY! THROUGH THE GAROEN

'BYE, BABY...

IT'D BEEN SO EASY TO FOOL ABEL. . .UNGLANDULAR ABEL. HE WAS TOO UNROMANTIC... TOO LOGICAL... TOO UNEMOTIONAL TO SUSPECT JANET OF ANYTHING AS BASE AND AS PRIMITIVE AS HER HAVING A DESIRE TO BE LOVED. . .

ENJOY THE T.V. PNOGRAMS TONIGHT, OEAR? HOPE YOU WENEN'T *TOO* LONELY!

NO, ABEL. I WASN'T TOO LONELY TONIGHT!

AND YET, *NOW*, ON THAT *VERY SAME COUCH* WHERE JANET AND LEON HAD SO OFTEN SAT AND WATCHED THE LABORATONY LIGHT CAST UPON THE BANDEN WALL, JANET'S PRIMITIVE DESIRE TO BE LOVED HAS SUDDENLY *VANISHED*. SHE LOOKS AT LEON'S FACE AND TURNS AWAY IN DISGUST. . .

DON'T *TOUCH* ME, LEON! DON'T EVEN COME *NEAR* ME. I COULDN'T *BEAR* IT!

OH, *LORD!* I'LL GO *MAD*... *STARK RAVING MAD!* *WHEN DID HE FIND OUT?*

WHEN DID ABEL GROVEN FINO OUT? WELL, LET'S BEE! IT WAS ON ONE OF THOSE NIGHTS WHEN HE WAS WORKING IN HIS CELLAN LABORATORY AND BRAZEN JANET AND LEON WERE UPSTAIRS... ON THE COUCH... IN EACH OTHERS ARMS... BUT ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE LIGHT. . .

IT'S GETTING LATE!

HE'S STILL DOWN THENE!

IT WAS THE NIGHT ABEL HAD JUST COMPLETED A MODERN SURGICAL MIRACLE USING HIS NEWLY DEVELOPED ANESTHETIC. HE'D RUSHED UPSTAIRS TO TELL JANET THE GOOD NEWS. AND HE'D NEGLECTED TO TURN OFF HIS LAB LIGHT. . .

JANET WILL BE SO *PROUD* WHEN I... TELL HER... *EH?*

OH, *HOLD ME*, LEON! HOLD ME *CLOSE!*

BABY!

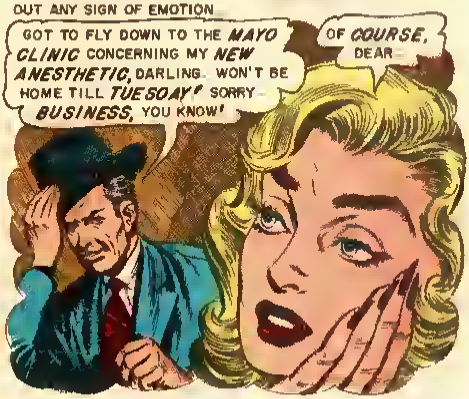
DR. ABEL GROVER'D STOOD IN THE SHADOWED DOORWAY TO THE TERRACE ROOM, AND HIS EAGER WORDS HAD CHOKED INTO A GAGGED SILENCE AS HE'D WATCHED THEM—HIS WIFE.. HIS LOVING WIFE—AND THE OTHER MAN..

HE'D HUNG BACK, NOT REVEALING HIMSELF, LISTENING TO THEIR LOVERS' WORDS...THEIR HEAVY BREATHING, THE SOUNDS OF THEIR PASSIONATE EMBRACE

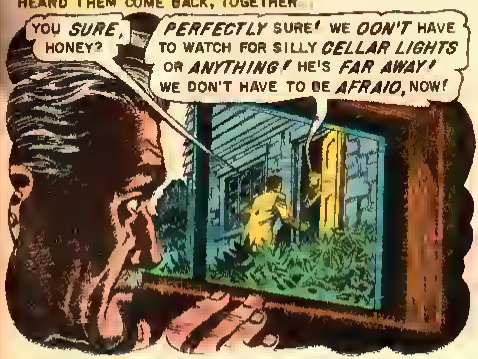
HE'D STUMBLED BACK TO HIS BASEMENT LAB, WHIMPERING AT THE SHARP SCALPEL OF SHOCKED DISILLUSIONMENT THAT RAZORED BRUTALLY AT HIS ACHING HEART WITH NO ANESTHETIC TO EASE THE JEALOUS PAIN..

A CALMNESS HAD COME OVER DR. GROVER THEN, AND A KIND OF PEACE. HE'D LOOKED AT THE RESULTS OF HIS LATEST MIRACULOUS SURGERY, PERFORMED ON LABORATORY ANIMALS WITH THE AID OF HIS NEW ANESTHETIC, AND HE'D KNOWN WHAT HE HAD TO DO

AND SO HE WAS ABLE TO FACE JANET THE NEXT DAY WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF EMOTION



HE'D SET HIS PLAN IN MOTION. NOW, ALL HE'D HAD TO DO WAS WAIT. WHEN JANET WENT OUT, HE'D RETURNED TO THE HOUSE AND HIDDEN IN HIS LABORATORY. HE'D HEARD THEM COME BACK, TOGETHER



AND AS THEY'D SAT ON THE COUCH, TASTING THE FIRST SWEET TANTALYZING MOMENTS OF THEIR TRYST.. HE'D COME OUT OF HIS LABORATORY, TIP-TOED SILENTLY UP BEHIND THEM, AND—

HE'D CARRIED THEM DOWN INTO THE LAB, ONE BY ONE, AND STRAPPED THEM TO OPERATING TABLES—SIDE BY SIDE...

HE'D GONE TO WORK, HIS EXPERIENCED HANDS, LIKE DELICATE MACHINES, HAD USED THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS TRADE SKILLFULLY...CUTTING... SLICING—SEWING . .

AND WHEN IT WAS DONE, HE'D KEPT THEM UNDER THE ANESTHETIC, FEEDING THEM INTRAVENOUSLY UNTIL THE HEALING PROCESS HAD BEEN COMPLETED . .

AND THEN HE'D CARRIED THEM UP AGAIN, ONE BY ONE, TO THE SELF-SAME COUCH WHERE HE'D FIRST SURPRISED THEM. AND HE'D LAUGHED . .

AND THEN THEY OPENED THEIR EYES—AND SMILED AT EACH OTHER.. AND STRETCHED AND YAWNED AND APOLOGIZED FOR FALLING ASLEEP—AND THEN THEY'D REACHED OUT—TO BE IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS—AND THEY'D SEEN—

YES, THEY'D BEEN MADLY IN LOVE, JANET GROVER AND LEON PAYNE, BUT NOW THAT LOVE IS GONE—JANET STARES AT LEON IN LOATHING AND DISGUST—AT HIS HEAD SEWN SO NEATLY TO WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN HER OWN BODY. AND LEON STARES AT LOVELY JANET'S FACE, AND DOWN TO HER NECK WHERE HER HEAD MEETS THE BODY THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HIS. AND IS IT ANY WONDER THEY WHISPER...

HEE, HEE! NOW *THERE'S* A SWITCH, EH, CREEPS? *THEY* SURE LOST *THEIR HEADS* OVER EACH OTHER, THOSE TWO. AT LEAST *DOC GROVER* MADE *SURE* OF IT. *WHERE'S* DOCTOR GROVER THESE NIGHTS, YOU ASK? OH, HE'S AT LARGE! HE'S *MAD*, YOU KNOW! *STARK RAVING!* GOES AROUND PAINTING *MOUSTACHES* OR *LADIES' FACES* IN *SUBWAY POSTERS*. AS FOR JARET AND LEON—WELL..., *WHO KNOWS?* AND *TALKING* ABOUT *NOSE*... I'LL *SIGN OFF* LIKE A FAMOUS BIG-NOSED COMEDIAN. "GOOD NIGHT, MISS JORGANSEN. . WHICHEVER YOU ARE!"

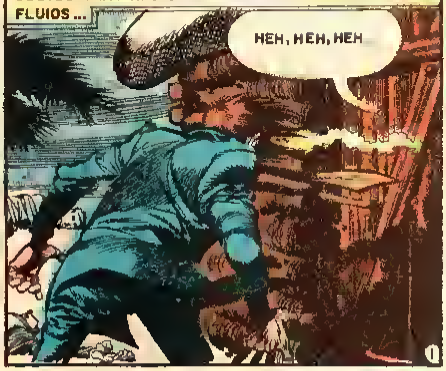
THE CRYPT OF TERROR

SALUTATIONS, SLOBS! IT'S FINAL *SLOP-SLOT* IN THIS *ICKY-ISSUE* OF THE *OLD WITCH'S MISERY-MAGAZINE* WITH LI'L OLD ME, *THE CRYPT-KEEPER*, WINDIN' IT UP. AFTER ALL THE *DREARY DREBS* YOU'VE *DROOLED DOWN* SO FAR, I'LL TRY TO LEAVE A *GOOO* TASTE IN YOUR MOUTH...BOOD AND *GRUESOME*, THAT IS! SO LET'S GO *NORTH* FOR THIS TALE OF TERROR I CALL...

COMES THE DAWN!

OVERHEAD, ICE-BLUE STARS SPARKLED LIKE DIAMONDS IN THE ARCTIC SKY, GLEAMING DOWN OVER THE WHITE WASTELAND THAT STRETCHED AWAY FROM THE CABIN INTERMINABLY IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THE FRIGID NIGHT WIND BLEW RAW AND CHILL . BUT IT COULD NOT DISCOURAGE THE HIDEOUS THING THAT YOWLED AND SNARLED AND TRIED TO CLAW ITS WAY INTO THE CABIN . ITS HUNGER... ITS THIRST STILL UNSATED, AS IT SLAVERED AND STROVE FEROCIOUSLY TO GET INTO THE SHACK, TO SEIZE JACK BOLTON, TO SINK ITS DROOLING FANGS INTO HIS WHITE THROAT, THE MAN WITHIN LAUGHED. HE LAUGHED AT THE FIENDISH INHUMAN MONSTER WHO HUNGERED FOR HIS BLOOD JUST A FEW INCHES OF WOOD AWAY...

YES, JACK BOLTON LAUGHED. IT WAS FUNNY, IN A GRUESOME WAY, TAUNTING A VAMPIRE. HE LAUGHED, TOO, AT THE TWO THINGS LYING OUT THERE IN THE COLD SNOW THE TWO BLUE-WHITE, DRIED-OUT BODIES THAT HAD BEEN DRAINED OF THEIR VITAL FLUIDS...



JACK BOLTON PEERED THROUGH THE CHUNK IN THE CABIN WALL, GRINRING OUT AT THE SNARLING MONSTER AND THE FREEZING CORPSES OF HIS TWO EX-PARTNERS BEYOND. THEN HE TURNED AWAY AND UNFOLDED THE MAP...

NO THREE-WAY SPLIT, NOW! THE *RICHEST URANIUM STRIKE* IN ALASKA ...AND IT'S *ALL MINE*!

HE GLANCED BACK AT THE DROOLING UGLY FACE STARING IN AT HIM THROUGH THE CHINK...

...THANKS TO *YOU*, MY *FANGED FRIEND!* IN A *FEW HOURS*, I'LL BE ABLE TO REACH THE PLANE... FLY TO *NOME*... AND STAKE MY CLAIM. AND *YOU* WON'T BE ABLE TO *STOP* ME! BECAUSE COMES THE *DAWN*... YOU'LL BE *GONE!*

AS FOR *SAM* AND *OLAF*... WELL, I'LL *TELL* THE *AUTHORITIES* THE *TRUTH*... UP TO A *POINT!* HOW-POOR GUYS. THEY WERE KILLED BY ..SO HELP ME... A *VAMPIRE*. I CAN SHOW THEM THE *BLOOD-DRAINED BODIES*... AND *KALAK*, OUR *ESKIMO GUIDE*, WILL BACK ME UP ABOUT THERE *BEING* A VAMPIRE!

EVEN THE SLOBBERING AND PANTING OF THE CREATURE OUTSIDE COULD NOT DISTURB THE ROSY GLOW JACK BOLTON FELT. YES, IT HAD ALL GONE EXACTLY AS HE'D PLANNED...

THE ONLY THING I *WON'T* TELL THE AUTHORITIES IS THAT I *PURPOSELY FREED THE VAMPIRE*... AND THAT *OLAF* AND *SAM* WERE *LOCKED OUT* OF THE CABIN WHEN IT CAME.

JACK LEANED BACK, ENJOYING THE DANCING FIRE, IGNORING THE SCRATCHING AND HOWLING SOUNDS BEYOND THE WINDOWLESS CABIN. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MORNING...WHEN ALL THIS HAD BEGUN. THEY'D WINGED NORTH FROM NOME IN THEIR HIRED PLANE... ACROSS THE BLEAK ARCTIC SNOW-DESERTS...

LET'S TRY THE AREA AROUND THE *CHANUK HILLS*, SAM!

ANY SPECIAL *REASON*, OLAF?

SAM...OLAF...AND HIM! PARTNERS! THEY'D POOLED THEIR SLIM FUNDS AND FINANCED A GAMBLE. A PROSPECTING JAUNT BY AIR...OVER THE ROOF OF THE WORLD. OLAF SUNDERSEN'D HANDLED THE MAPS. HE'D ALWAYS HAD AN UNCANNY KNACK FOR SMELLING OUT PAY-DIRT...

I GOT A *HUNCH* ABOUT THE CHANUK HILLS, SAM!

OKAY, OLAF. WE'LL GIVE THEM A LISTEN

SAM WAYNE'D HANDLED THE "CHATTER-BOX"... THE GEIGER COUNTER. YES, THESE WERE MODERN PROSPECTORS, USING MODERN TOOLS...

C'MON, BABY! *SPEAK UP! START CLICKIN'!* HEY, JACK... KEEP 'ER *LOW!* THIS GADGET WON'T *WORK* FROM *TOO FAR UP!*

RIGHT, SAM!

AND HE, JACK BOLTON, HAD FLOWN THE CRATE. AND IT WAS NO BREEZE TRYING TO KEEP A STEADY LOW ALTITUDE OVER THOSE WIND-SWEPT BARREN WASTES.
CHANUK HILLS...DEAD AHEAD! HANG ON! IT'S GONNA BE A ROUGH RIDE
JACK HAD SKIMMED AS LOW AS HE'D DARED OVER THE SNOW HILLS AND ICE PEAKS IN ORDER TO GIVE THE GEIGER COUNTER A CHANCE TO PICK UP ANY SIGNS OF RADIO-ACTIVITY. HE'D CROSSED AND CRISS-CROSSED THE VAST, PRACTICALLY UNEXPLORED MOUNTAIN RANGE FOR ALMOST AN HOUR, WHEN...
HEY! HEY, LISTEN! SHE'S GOING WILD!
URANIUM BELOW! JACK! CIRCLE AROUND...
CLIC CLIC CLIC CLIC CLIC CLIC
THEY'D CIRCLED THE RADIO-ACTIVE AREA, LISTENING TO THE FADING AND INCREASING CLICKS...FEELING OUT THE BOUNDERIES OF THE DEPOSIT...
IT'S HUGE! IT'S A BONANZA! WE'VE STRUCK IT RICH!
NOT YET, OLD BOY! WE CAN'T LAND DOWN THERE! TOO ROUGH!
I SAW AN ESKIMO VILLAGE BEFORE. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN LAND THERE AND HIRE SOME DOG SLEDS AND A GUIDE. THOSE THREE 'SISTER PEAKS' ARE A PERFECT LANDMARK...
LADY LUCK HAD NOT ONLY SHELLED OUT THE JACKPOT, BUT SHE'D ALSO MADE EVERYTHING CONVENIENT FOR THEM. THE ESKIMO VILLAGE HAD NOT BEEN MANY MILES OFF AND A FROZEN LAKE HAD MADE A PERFECT LANDING PLACE...
OKAY, KALAK! YOU GOT YOURSELF A DEAL. YOU GUIDE US TO THE THREE PEAKS AND WE'LL PAY YOUR PRICE!
I GET DOG SLEDS READY! IT NOT LONG TRIP...THREE...FOUR HOURS!
WHEN THEY'D REACHED THE AREA, SAM'S GEIGER COUNTER HAD REALLY GONE WILD...
LISTEN TO IT! LISTEN!
THERE'S MORE GOLD IN FISSION FORM HERE THAN KING MIDAS EVER DREAMED ABOUT.
SAY! WHAT'S THIS?
CLEC CLEC CLEC CLEC CLEC CLEC
AND THEN THEY'D FOUND THE CRUDE WOODEN BOX FROZEN SOLID IN THE ICE...
IT...LOOKS LIKE A COFFIN!
A COFFIN!? WHAT IN BLAZES WOULD A COFFIN BE DOING OUT HERE?
LOOKS REAL OLD! LET'S DIG 'ER OUT AND...
...AND THEY'D HEARD KALAK'S SCREAM...AND SEEN THE LOOK IN HIS EYES...
NO! STOP! LEAVE IT BE! LEAVE IT BE! DO NOT FREE THE VAMPIRE!
VAMPIRE!? ARE YOU KIDDING, KALAK?

KALAK'S SPINE-TINGLING WONDS HAD HISSED FROM SLOODLESS LIPS SET IN A FRIGHTENED FACE...
GNANUK VAMPIRE! EACH SPNING THAW IT COMES... WHEN COFFIN IS FREE. MANY OF MY PEDPLE DIE. WE THANKFUL WHEN FREEZE NETURN... AND VAMPIRE IS TRAPPED IN ICE ONCE MORE! WE LOOK FON COFFIN BUT NEVEN FIND 'PLEASE... LEAVE IT...
WELL, LOOK, KALAK! WE CAN RID YOUN VILLAGE OF THIS THING ONCE AND FOR ALL!
SURE! ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS DRIVE A STAKE...
NO! NO! MUSH!
KALAK HAD LOOKED AT THE DARKENING SKY AND MUSHED OFF SCREAMING...
HEY!
COME BACK, YOU IDIOT!
BLAST NIM! WE'LL NEVER FIND OUN WAY BACK TO THE VILLAGE IN THE DARK!
BUT FATE HAD ONCE MORE BEEN KIND TO THEM, FOR, A FEW HUNDRED YARDS OFF, THEY'D FOUND THE OLD ABANDONED TRAPPER'S CABIN...
LOOK! WHAT LUCK!
WE CAN STAY THERE TILL MORNING!
IT'D BEEN A CHEERLESS WINDOWLESS ONE-ROOMED AFFAIR, OLD AND DILAPIDATED AND DRAFTY. BUT THERE'D BEEN A FIRE-PLACE INSIDE AND SOME WOOD, AND THEY'D GOTTEN A FIRE STARTED...
TOMORROW MORNING, WE'LL GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE, FLY TO NOME, AND STAKE OUR CLAIM...
A THREE-WAY SPLIT OF THIS FIND WILL PUT US ALL IN CLOVER!
WHAT ABOUT THAT VAMPIRE? WE'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF IT IF WE WANT THE ESKIMOS TO HELP US WORK THE CLAIM!
BUT JACK HAD GOTTEN OTHEN IDEAS ASOUT THE VAMPIRE LYING IN ITS ICE-BOUND COFFIN OUT IN THE GATHERING DUSK...
THREE-WAY SPLIT, HUH? WHAT ABOUT A ONE-WAY SPLIT.. ALL MINE! I CDULD PUT THAT BLOOD-SUCKER DUT THENE TO GOOD USE. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR SAM AND OLAF TO FALL ASLEEP..
AND SO, HOURS LATER, WITH NIGHT BLANKETING THAT NORTHERN ICE WORLD, JACK HAD GATHERED ARMFULS OF FIREWOOD FROM THE SUPPLY IN THE OLD CABIN AND STEALTHILY CREPT INTO THE NIGHT...
BOTH OF 'EM ARE SOUND ASLEEP. NOW'S MY CHANCE...
4

HE'D CANNIED THE WOOD TO THE SPOT WHENE THE ANCIENT COFFIN LAY FROZEN IN ITS ICE-GRAVE. SOON HE'D BROUGHT OUT ENOUGH TO COMPLETE A CINCLE AROUND THE EENIE CONTAINER WITH ITS TNAPPED OCCUPANT...

THERE! NOW... TO *LIGHT IT!*

THE ONY LOGS HAD NOANED UP INTO A HUNGNY FINE THAT CAST ITS HEAT ONTO THE ICE...MELTING IT SLOWLY...FNEEING THE COFFIN...

I'D BETTEN STANT BACK...

NEAN THE CABIN BOLTON'D PAUSED AND LOOKED BACK, WANTING TO BE SUNE. HE'D SEEN THE LAST BIT OF ICE PUDDLE AWAY...HEAND THE SHARP OMINOUS CNEAK ECHO THNOUGH THE CNISP COLD NIGHT AIN...

THE *LIO!* IT'S *OPEHING!* IT...CHOKE...

CREEAK

AND THEN HE'O SEEN THE ANCIENT TERRON OF THIS NONTHLAND IN ALL ITS MALEVOLENCE NISE UP, RAPACIOUS TO SATISFY ITS FOUL LUST SO LONG DENIED FULFILLMENT BY ITS ICY PNISON...

GOOD LOND' I ..I'VE GOT TO *HURRY*..

HE'O NUN, STUMBLING OVEN THE NEMAINING DISTANCE TO THE CABIN, SCNEAMING...

OLAF! SAM! OH, LORD! OLAF! SAM!

THEY'O COME FNOM THE CABIN .. SLEEPY-EYED...SHOCKED FNOM THEIN PEACEFUL SLUMBEN BY JACK'S SCREAMS...

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? *WHAT'S WRONG, JACK?* *LOOK!*

AND, JUST AS HE'O PLANNED, WHILE OLAF AHO SAM HAD STANED AT THE HIDEOUS THING NOW COMING TOWANOS THEM, JACK HAD SLIPPED INTO THE CABIN AND SLID THE BOLT SHUT...

IT'S ..IT'S THE *VAMPIRE!*

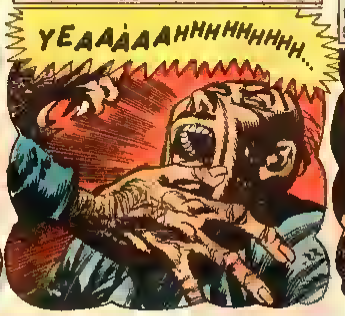
JACK! JACK, OPEN THE DOOR! FOR GOD'S SAKE! JACK...

BOLTON'D HEARD IT ALL. THOSE BLOOD-CURDLING SOUNDS WOULD BE FOREVER INGRAINED IN HIS MEMORY. FIRST, THE FEVERISH HAMMERING ON THE CABIN DOOR...THE HYSTERICAL PLEADING..

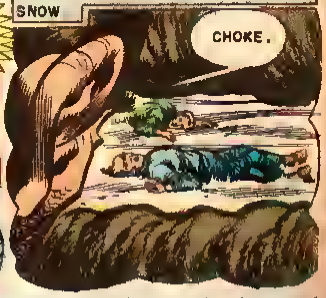
THEN SAM'S HORRIBLE SHRIEK OF PAIN AS THE VILE THING LEAPED UPON HIM SINKING ITS RAZOR SHARP FANGS INTO HIS NECK. AND OLAF'S CHILDISH WHIMPERING...

THE SICKENING SUCKING SOUNDS AS THE THING'D FEASTED UPON SAM'S LIFE-FLUID. THE CHOKING SIGH AS OLAF'D RETCHED AND FAINTED...

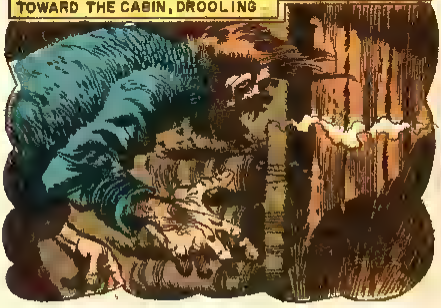
BOLTON'D TRIED TO STUFF THE WALL CHINKS—TO STOP THE ECHOES OF DEATH FROM REACHING HIS EARS. BUT STILL THEY'D COME: SAM'S LAST BUBBLING MOAN, OLAF'S GRUNT AS HE'D COME TO. HIS SCREAM AS THE VAMPIRE'D TURNED UPON HIM..



THEN THE SILENCE.. THE AWFUL SILENCE.. AND THE QUIET HEAVY BREATHING OF THE THING OUTSIDE. JACK HAD FINALLY GATHERED ENOUGH NERVE TO PEER THROUGH ONE OF THE CHINKS BETWEEN THE LOGS. AND HE'D SEEN HIS EX-PARTNERS' BODIES LYING STILL AND WHITE IN THE SNOW



HE'D WATCHED IN HORROR AS THE THING HAD TURNED, SENSING THE FURTHER PRESENCE OF BLOOD. ITS PERIOD OF ENTRAPMENT HAD BEEN LONG...ITS HUNGER GREAT. ITS TWO VICTIMS HAD ONLY *PARTIALLY* SATISFIED ITS HUNGER. IT'D STARTED TOWARD THE CABIN, DROOLING



BOLTON'D LISTENED, SHIVERING, AS THE FANGED MEMBER OF THE LIVING DEAD HAD CLAWED AND SCRATCHED AND SCREAMED IN FRUSTRATION AT THE WEATHERBEATEN LOGS... THE STONE BARRED DOOR. FINALLY, JACK'D LAUGHED.. A NERVOUS HOLLOW FRIGHTENED LAUGH...

AND SOON, HIS LAUGH HAD BECOME A *TAUNTING* LAUGH AS THE HOURS PASSED AND THE NIGHT GREW OLD...

FOR THIS WAS EXACTLY AS JACK HAD PLANNED IT. HE...SAFE AND SOUND IN THE SNUG LITTLE CABIN...AND THE VAMPIRE OUTSIDE... SCRATCHING, CLAWING, FEVERISHLY TRYING TO SET IN BEFORE DAWN STHEAKED THE EASTERN SKY WITH ITS COLD LIGHT...

DHE WAY OR THE DTHER, I GET RID OF IT EITHEN IT GETS BACK IHTO IT'S COFFIH BEFORE DAWN AND I GET IT WITH A STAKE...

...OR IT FALLS TO DUST AS SOON AS THE FIRST RAYS OF LIGHT HIT IT! ONE WAY OR OTHEN, I WIH!

JACK LEANED BACK, IGNORING THE SCRATCHING AND HOWLING SOUNDS BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE WINDOWLESS CABIN. ENJOYING THE FADING FINE. HE GLANCED AT HIS WATCH... HIS REVENIE ENDED...

SAY! IT'S ALMOST SIX A.M.! ANO THAT THING'S STILL OUT THERE!

BOLTON COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT. THE SUN WOULD BE COMING UP ANY MINUTE. YET THE VAMPIRE'D MADE NO MOVE TO NETUNN TO ITS COFFIN. WAS IT BOING TO LET DAWN, ITS SLAYEN, TNAP IT AND DESTNOY IT? A FADEO YELLOW SHEEF OF PAPERS PINNEO TO THE WALL CAUGHT JACK'S EYE...

HMMM. THIS CALANDAN'S A FEW YEARS OLD, BUT IT'LL GIVE ME AN IDEA OF JUST WHEN THE SUN RISES ANOUND THESE PANTS THIS TIME OF...OF...

OH, LORD! I FONGOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...

BOLTON SCAMPENED ABOUT WILDLY...PEERING INTO THE EMPTY DUSTY CUFBOANDS, THE BARE DRAWERS... THE BANNEN STONAGE COMPARTMENTS OF THE LONG-AGO OCCUPIED CABIN AND HE SCNEAMED AT NOBODY IN FANTICULAR...

IF I STAY HERE, I'LL STARVE TO DEATH! THERE ISN'T A DROP OF FODD IN THE PLACE! AND I CAH'T MAKE IT BACK TO THE ESKIMO VILLAGE! THE VAMPIRE'S OUT THENE.. WAITIHG FON ME! WHAT CHOICE HAVE I GOT? THAT THING'S GOING TO KEEP WAITING...WAITING...BECAUSE...

BOLTON LOOKED AGAIN AT THE FADED YELLOW CALENDAR. HE STARED AT THE GLEAMING EYES BURNING IN AT HIM THROUGH THE WALL CHINK. HE WHIMPERED SOFTLY...

...BECAUSE DAWN UP HERE AT THIS LATITUDE...THIS TIME OF YEAR...DOESN'T COME FOR...ANOTHER... SOB...WEEK!

HEH, HEH! WELL, KIDDIES...THAT'S MY COOL TALE FON THIS ISSUE OF THE OLD BAG'S MAG. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF YOU WENE IN JACK BOLTON'S PLACE? STAY AND STARVE...OR GO OUT AND FEED A STARVING VAMPIRE? THIHK ABOUT IT FOR A FEW MINUTES. FIHISHED? FEEL SICK? WELL, YOU CAN HEAVE IF YOU WANT! IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE CNYPT ANYWAY. IN FACT IT'S TIME TO CLOSE D.W.'S PUTRID PERIODICAL. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT. IN THE MEANWHILE, A BIT OF ADVICE. IF YOU HAVEN'T JOINED THE E.O. FAN-ADDICT CLUB...WELL... 'BYE!

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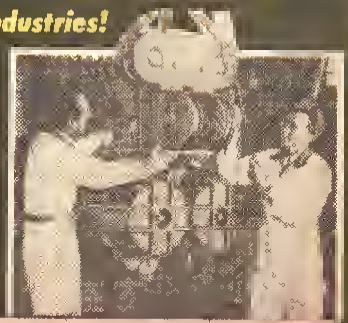

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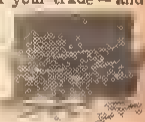

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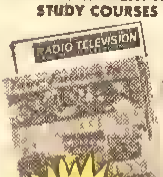

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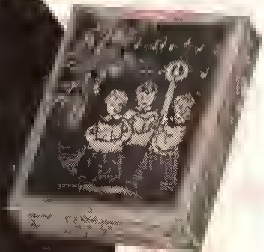

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